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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5744
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3457
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3321
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3987
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3965

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001260

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [RU](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: STILL NOT ISSUING NEW PASSPORTS TO
DUAL CITIZENS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 1371

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 1494

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Sylvia Reed Curran. Reasons 1.4 (B) a
nd (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Government of Turkmenistan has apparently not yet decided whether to enforce a law disallowing dual citizenship as they issue new foreign travel passports to Turkmen citizens. Those who only declared single citizenship on the application forms have received their new passports, but dual citizens have not. Current holders of both Turkmen and Russian passports are weighing options about what to do if the Turkmen government does not offer a compromise that would allow them to get the new Turkmen passports while keeping their Russian ones. In 2013, the year when the old Turkmen passports expire, dual citizens could be forced to choose between countries and many, as a result, could leave Turkmenistan. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Since the announcement in June 2008 that Turkmenistan would begin issuing new foreign travel passports to its citizens (Ref A), none of the locally engaged Embassy employees that Poloff spoke to have heard of a dual citizen receiving their new Turkmen passport. People who are citizens solely of Turkmenistan, on the other hand, receive their new passports within roughly a week after applying. The problem mainly concerns Turkmen citizens who also hold Russian passports, approximately one-fifth of the country's population (Ref B). (COMMENT: If as many as 20% of the population hold Russian passports, then it is not limited to ethnic Slavs, who only comprise approximately 10% of the population. END COMMENT.) When the Soviet Union fell apart, people living in Turkmenistan were automatically granted Turkmen citizenship, but based on an agreement with Russia at the time, were also allowed to apply for Russian citizenship.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Turkmen citizens are not currently allowed to hold dual citizenship, but this provision in the law has not been enforced until now. Most of the Turkmen-Russian dual citizens travel abroad on their Russian passports which afford them entry to more countries without visas and also give them longer length visas because of the reciprocity

agreements that Russia has. If the Turkmen government continues to not issue new passports to dual citizens, those people will be forced to make a choice between Turkmenistan and Russia sometime before the June 2013 date when the old passports will no longer be valid.

¶4. (C) This problem is rearing its head already because Turkmenistan is no longer issuing the old passports. A local contact reported that the company that printed the old passport books no longer produces them. If a dual citizen travels frequently and runs out of pages in her old passport, she cannot get it replaced.

¶5. (C) Local contacts have various plans for what they would do if the Turkmen Government does not begin issuing the passports to dual citizens. Some plan to leave Turkmenistan and move to Russia or another former Soviet country where they have family and friends. Others said that they would give up their Russian passport, although that was clearly not their preference. If they gave up their Turkmen citizenship but stayed in the country as foreigners, under current law they would not be allowed to own real estate or get a local residence permit.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: If the Turkmen government does not come up with a compromise to allow dual citizenship, 2013 could prove to be a watershed date in Turkmen history. People would probably base the decision to leave or stay on where they had family and friends, and where they thought they would be economically better off. The breakup of the Soviet Union left many families spread between countries, and the Turkmen

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government has been increasingly narrowing the range of opportunities for non-ethnic Turkmen in Turkmenistan, for instance, with requirements that government employees speak Turkmen. The Turkmen government has a track record of producing compromises at the last minute, but if it decides to enforce the no dual citizenship requirement, many non-ethnic Turkmen may choose to leave. This would decrease the population in an already sparsely populated country and possibly lead to another round of brain drain that could further degrade the quality of education and the level of technical expertise in the country. END COMMENT.
CURRAN